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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5220  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3211  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3322  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1746  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2580  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2949  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0010  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0012  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2489  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000970

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: FORMER ZIMBABWE ANGLICAN BISHOP DISRUPTS CHURCH  
ACTIVITIES AGAIN

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) A recent series of church disruptions mark a resurgence of the heated dispute between the Anglican Church in the Province of Central Africa (CPCA) and a breakaway faction led by former CPCA Bishop Nolbert Kunonga. The latest actions by Kunonga and his followers further undermine the tenuous agreement brokered by the High Court of Zimbabwe in January 2008, allowing the two parties to share church premises pending a final court determination. The dispute has assumed political significance as Kunonga has leveraged his ZANU-PF ties to gain the support of the police. END SUMMARY.

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Background: Kunonga vs. the CPCA  
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¶2. (SBU) Dr. Nolbert Kunonga was the bishop for the Harare Diocese of the Anglican Church in the Province of Central Africa (CPCA). In 2007, he broke from the CPCA citing the CPCA's approach to homosexuality, which he felt was too liberal. He then formed a rival church and appointed himself its archbishop. However, Kunonga refused to surrender the assets of the CPCA and continued to access the church's financial resources. He then embarked on a campaign to prevent the CPCA from worshipping in church buildings and -- using his political connections to ZANU-PF -- enlisted police support. Several priests were arrested and prosecuted during 2008 and 2009 for holding CPCA church services in contested properties.

¶3. (SBU) In 2007, the CPCA filed suit in the High Court seeking to bar Kunonga from utilizing its facilities and other assets. This was followed by a January 2008 High Court

ruling that stated that the Kunonga faction and the CPCA must share church premises by scheduling church services at different times. Despite the court order, Kunonga's faction has periodically denied the CPCA use of church premises. As the conflict intensified, the co-ministers of Home Affairs, Kembo Mohadi and Giles Mutsekwa, intervened to rein in Kunonga, his followers, and heavy-handed police.

14. (SBU) In July 2009, Judge Hlatshwayo, at the request of Kunonga, issued an order that the CPCA had not properly excommunicated Kunonga and that he retained his position as bishop. Kunonga hoped to use the order to prevent the coronation of the new bishop for the CPCA in Harare. However, the CPCA appealed and the ruling was suspended, clearing the way for the coronation of the new bishop, Chad Gandiya.

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Kunonga Claims He's Still the Bishop...  
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15. (SBU) CPCA Registrar Mike Chingore told Political Specialist that Kunonga was buoyed by the Hlatshwayo judgment and claimed never to have left the church. He said that Kunonga maintains he is the only lawful head of the church and is attempting to regain his position.

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...and is Back to his Old Tricks  
Q...and is Back to his Old Tricks  
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16. (SBU) The CPCA reported that in the past two weeks Kunonga followers prevented CPCA members from attending mass,

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disrupted services, and forced the cancellation of three weddings. On December 6, Kunonga supporters -- with the support of police officers -- locked the gates to the Highfield church, preventing about 1,000 parishioners from worshipping. When the local priest, Reverend Selemani, demanded to know on whose authority the police were acting, he was told they were acting "on higher orders." A member of the Highfield church reported that the police accused the church of supporting the MDC-T. On December 5, police disrupted three weddings at the Budiriro church, resulting in their cancellation. On November 28, police drove away parishioners from a Murehwa church -- about 100 km from Harare -- as they prepared to take communion. At the Kuwadzana church, police padlocked the doors before mass. Similar situations unfolded in Glen Norah, Glen View, Hatfield, Marlborough, and Tafara.

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Police Back Kunonga  
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17. (SBU) Chingore told us that Kunonga and his followers had disrupted church activities with the assistance of some sections of the police. He said the police had consistently refused to arrest Kunonga followers breaking the law. Police defended their actions by stating that they were merely following orders from unnamed superiors. Chingore said that they were deterred from filing criminal reports because of the biased police position. He went on to state that CPCA members were becoming impatient with the impunity with which the police and Kunonga supporters had acted.

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CPCA Goes To Court Again  
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18. (SBU) CPCA lawyer Mordecai Mahlangu told us he filed an urgent application in the High Court on December 11 for contempt of court against the Commissioner General of Police, Augustine Chihuri, and Co-Ministers of Home Affairs, Giles

Mutsekwa (MDC-T) and Kembo Mohadi (ZANU-PF). He wants the court to force Chihuri and the two ministers to direct the police to stop interfering with the activities of the church and to observe the 2008 High Court judgment. He said he did not expect the court to hear the case soon because of the likelihood of political sensitivity.

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Alternative: Peaceful Protest?  
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¶9. (SBU) The new Bishop of the Harare Diocese, Chad Gandiya, met with priests and wardens on December 11 to try to develop a strategic response to Kunonga's conduct. The church registrar told us that a lot of members were increasingly voicing a need for robust and effective responses to the disruptions. Some were in favor of peaceful protests against police actions.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (SBU) We have long witnessed police reticence to maintain the rule of law in rural areas, most commonly on contested farms. However, police tolerance for illegal actions by Kunonga supporters in Harare indicates that there are no limits to the extent shrewd operators like Kunonga can politicize a dispute. Growing impatience within CPCA ranks could lead to more violent confrontations if the issue

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remains unaddressed. END COMMENT.

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